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TAGS: PREL PHUM CU SW EU  
SUBJECT: SWEDEN, THE EU, AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA

REF: (A) STATE 32156(B) 08STATE STOCKHOLM 664

Classified By: COM JONATHAN FARRAR FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D)

¶1. (C) Chief of Mission (COM) met on April 13 with Swedish Ambassador Caroline Fleetwood at her request to discuss U.S.-Cuban relations and Sweden's perspective on Cuba as Sweden prepares to assume the EU Presidency. Ambassador Fleetwood travels to Washington later this month for a schedule that includes meetings with the Department and others on Cuba issues.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Fleetwood began by saying that the EU missions in Havana have started drafting a paper to submit to Brussels prior to the EU's review of Cuba policy in June. COM asked what signs she saw of any progress on the human rights front since last June. The ambassador replied that Cuba may ratify the UN covenants on civil and political rights, and on economic, social and cultural rights, and had invited the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit Cuba. She added that the release of some political prisoners would be a definitive sign of progress. COM noted these mostly were actions that Cuba might take in the future rather than indications of recent progress. He added that EU Commissioner Louis Michel made three visits to Cuba over the past year without meeting with civil society and apparently without raising human rights with the GOC. Ambassador Fleetwood said Michel had raised human rights in one of his meetings but without result, adding that the Cubans are tough negotiators.

¶3. (C) COM noted that we have received reports of Sweden's new human-rights centered foreign policy, and asked the Ambassador how she would balance pursuing that policy with reaching consensus on EU positions. The ambassador said she still was considering her approach on human rights. When asked if she meets with civil society, the ambassador said that her DCM does so. COM encouraged her to think of human rights in a broad context, and look for areas such as Internet access where Sweden might help the people of Cuba to connect with the world, and vice-versa. This prompted a series of questions from the ambassador regarding USINT's Internet centers, and the degree to which the GOC attempts to interfere or to screen Cuban users.

¶4. (C) The ambassador asked about our interpretation of the March changes in the GOC Cabinet and other personnel moves. COM said the most succinct explanation was that Raul Castro was putting in place people with whom he is most comfortable, and asked the ambassador whether she thought the moves constitute an advance or retreat from prospects for transition in Cuba. The ambassador said the changes help

advance the transition from Fidel to Raul, but not beyond (Note: we agree). Ambassador Fleetwood asked what the COM thought of Raul's economic policy changes, and what Cuban people thought of them. COM said he sees the policy changes thus far as superficial with the possible exception of the program to lease farmland, which had at least some potential to increase production. He added that most of the Cuban people with whom he talks around town have limited access to foreign currency and are more focused on making ends meet on official salaries of twenty dollars a month than on access to consumer goods which they cannot afford.

¶15. (C) Ambassador Fleetwood asked about the recent Congressional Black Caucus CODEL, and what it might augur for changes in U.S. policy toward Cuba. COM said that USINT had considerable interaction with the CODEL but that the Members of Congress set their own agenda. He added that we would announce soon policy changes toward Cuba on travel, remittances, and other areas important to the people of Cuba, and that we then would have to see what is the GOC response.

¶16. (C) Comment: Ambassador Fleetwood is caught between a GOS foreign policy to promote human rights and her own desire for closer contacts with the GOC, and thus has been dragging her heels on any human rights initiatives. We recommend Washington use upcoming meetings with her to urge Sweden to get moving on its bilateral efforts, and to use its upcoming presidency to foster closer cooperation between the U.S. and the EU on Cuba. The April 13 White House announcement on Cuban policy initiatives opens the door for us to make some progress on both fronts. End comment.

FARRAR